SSARG's Laptop Computer
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SSARG used to have access to the South Cadbury Environs Project laptop, but that developed power supply problems a few months ago and is no more. So we have recently acquired a second hand machine to support our activities.

What is it for? Many post excavation jobs need us to enter and process large amounts of data, for example:-

•Analysis of pottery and other finds
•Tracing scanned images of trench drawings
•Analysis of geophysics survey data
•Recording of excavations.
•Report preparation
•Data archiving

and the new machine is intended to support these tasks.

Selecting a laptop rather than a desktop machine gives us a more flexible facility. It enables us to use it in the field for instance, downloading and checking geophysics data before taking up the grid. We can also take it to places like museum stores to enter data on site or use it with a projector to give talks.

The machine is available to support any SSARG activity at the unit, but if you plan to use it, please check with Nigel Harvey (harveytron@hotmail.com) whether it will be available for the day you want. It is not intended that it should be borrowed for long periods - most people have their own computers that they can use at home. However, It can be used away from the unit to support your archaeology project by arrangement with the committee.

The machine has a Windows 8.1 operating system, which if you are still using earlier versions of Windows such as XP, you may find a little challenging. If you are not familiar with 8.1, you can always ask me to give you a quick introduction to it. One disadvantage of 8.1 is that some of our essential legacy software, such as Geoplot, will not run on it. There is no immediate prospect that Bartington will release a usable version of Geoplot, so we have arranged for Geoplot to run on a "virtual machine" with Windows XP operating system hosted on the laptop. More on this later.

When you start up the laptop you will see this 'desktop' screen:-
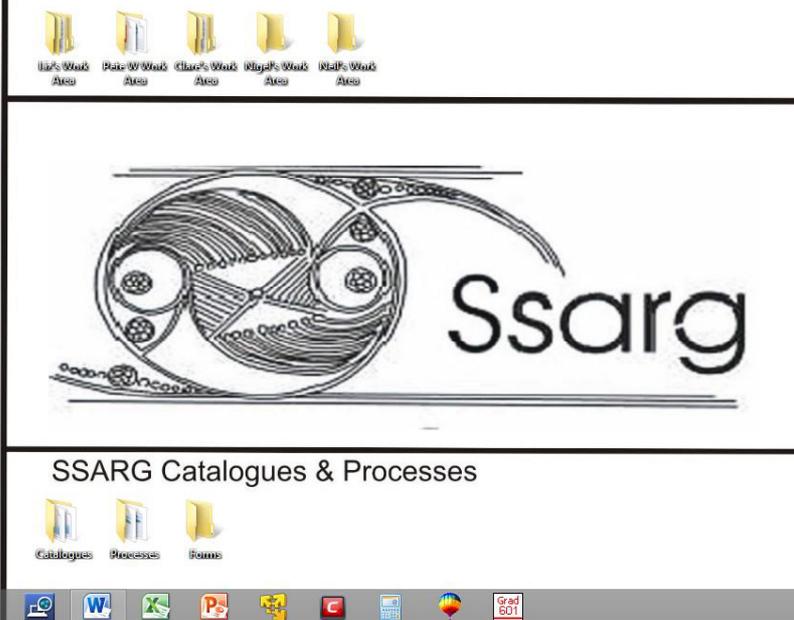
Where possible everything is saved on the desktop, rather than 'My Documents' or 'My Pictures' etc..

Member's work folders
Across the top of the screen are a set of member's work folders. If you want to work on the machine, create your own folder and store all you files in there. Please don't mess with other people's folders.

Historic Data
Down the right hand side of the screen is archived SCEP, SSARG and geophysics data. Please feel free to copy any of this into your work area to use for your own purposes, but please do not delete or modify these original archive files – treat them as 'read-only' files unless you are extremely sure you know what you are doing. When you produce additional data or reports, please save a copy of the final version of them here so that others can access them.

SSARG Documentation
Across the bottom of the screen are a set of folders containing various SSARG catalogues, process descriptions, forms, etc.. These are the master copies of these documents. They are live documents that are intended as reference material for you to use and update. For instance, there is a catalogue of drawings, if you create, scan or trace a drawing please update this catalogue. If you start a new activity, help those who come after you by recording how you are doing the job in a 'process' document so that we can learn from you and have traceable and consistent working practices. However, if you create a new process document for your project, it is OK to start from an existing document, but you should save yours as a new document for your project (the original author will want to keep a record of how they did their job).

System Icons
Down the left hand side of the screen are various system icons. These include all the usual shortcuts to software and system functions.

The software available to you includes:-
- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel
- Microsoft Powerpoint
- CorelDraw
- VMware
- Geoplot – running under VMware
- Grad601

Other software may be added in due course e.g. some GIS software.

At present, I am looking after the system administration. I will periodically backup the system to an external hard disk (roughly every month) but since this is dependent on our field work programme, it may be at variable intervals. I suggest that you bring a USB memory stick with you and make a backup of you own files by copying them onto your memory stick - you might not want loose a month's worth of work if the computer crashes!

Since Wi-Fi is not available at the unit or in the field, it is expected that most work will be performed off-line. There is antivirus and firewall software installed, but expect to see a warning at the top right of the screen that it is out of date. We can't update it every day without Wi-Fi, but I will periodically update it when I do the backup. Please do not go on-line when VMware Player is running, it has all the security vulnerabilities of Windows XP.

Please note that the laptop does not have a built in CD/DVD drive. We have bought an external USB DVD drive, which is kept in the bag with the laptop. If you need to read or write CDs or DVDs, connect the drive to a USB port using the square-ended lead. (The round-ended lead is only needed on laptops with old USB1 standard connections which can't provide enough current from only one port.

When at the unit, please always run the laptop with the power supply connected to the machine, so that the battery is always fully charged if we need to take it out into the field.

If you prefer to use a proper mouse, there is one and a mouse mat, in the computer bag. The mouse has an extending lead – pull it out to the length you need, pull again briefly and release to make the lead reel in again.

If you are not going to be using Geoplot you probably don't need to read this bit. To run Geoplot, first ensure the laptop is off-line, then open VMware Player by clicking the icon (yellow arrows in right hand section of desktop).This will open the VMware Player welcome screen, select "Windows XP Home Edition" on the left side of the window then click "Play Virtual Machine" on the right hand side. Click "OK" on the removable devices screen if it pops up. The window will then behave just like a Windows XP machine booting up and eventually arrive at the old familiar XP desktop. Then just click the Geoplot icon to run it. Liz and I are still working up the best way to move data between the real and virtual machines, but you can drag-and-drop or copy files from Geoplot to the the real desktop or to a USB stick. When you have finished, close Geoplot but please remember to close XP by clicking the 'Start' button at the bottom left of the virtual desktop and selecting 'Turn Off Computer', 'Turn Off' just as with a real XP machine. Please don't just close the window by click the X at the top right – that is like turning the computer off at the mains when it is still running, it won't like it.

Please make full use of this machine. If you have technical queries, please contact me, if you have availability queries please contact Nigel (harveytron@hotmail.com).

Pete Wright. April 2015
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